

# ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** November 13, 2014

**Agenda Item:** Elk Management in Areas with Brucellosis 2015 Work Plan

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 45 minutes

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## **Background**

In January 2013, the Commission endorsed elk management recommendations from a citizen working group for application in areas with brucellosis (including the Designated Surveillance Area as described by the Montana Department of Livestock). The Commission also recognized the need for annual work plans based upon these recommendations. The annual work plans describe specific management actions available for implementation. The proposed 2015 annual work plan represents the third iteration of annual plans and it builds upon the 2013 and 2014 plans and the experience gained in their implementation. The proposed 2015 plan includes hazing, fencing, lethal removal of elk, habitat modifications and other efforts to adjust elk distribution to mitigate the risk of brucellosis transmission from elk to cattle. This proposal includes the potential for local work groups to propose modifications or additions to the 2015 plan at a later date to the Commission. A supplemental document contains the proposed 2015 annual plan and is available to the public from FWP.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

The public comment opportunity ran through 5 p.m. Monday, September 8. Eighteen comments were received with opposition consistently represented from sportspersons. Support came from the landowner comments.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends adopting of the proposed 2015 annual work plan as it was originally adopted by the FW Commission for public comment on August 8, 2014. This plan reflects experience gained from 2013 and 2014 efforts as well as inputs from the statewide working group and the public. In light of the process and product criticisms received in public comments, FWP has reviewed the proposed plan and is re-proposing it here. While there are clearly difference of opinion among landowners and sporting interests, FWP continues to see the proposed plan as a reasonable option that maintains elk on the landscape while also assisting landowners with risk management efforts that includes hunter participation in limited lethal removals. As an additional step towards broader tolerance, FWP will host a public review in January to present and discuss information used to identify elk as a potential brucellosis risk to livestock.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

Proposals may be adopted as proposed or with adjustment per staff justifications, public comment and/or Commission discussion.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move to adopt the proposed 2015 annual work plan for elk management in areas with brucellosis as presented by FWP.